

Cleanup gets local help ✓

Island Creek
Oysters donating
to harbor effort

By GateHouse News Service

A key to combating pollution in rivers and harbors could be found on restaurant menus.

The Massachusetts Oyster Project will release 100,000 water-cleansing seed oysters at the mouth of the Charles River on Saturday. Duxbury company Island Creek Oysters will provide about 50,000 of the young oysters, which will each filter 30 gallons of water per day, removing harmful nitrogen, bacteria and phytoplankton.

"An oyster is probably the most effective way to remove nitrogen

from water," said Skip Bennett, who owns Island Creek Oysters. "(Nitrogen) comes in from fertilizer and runoff and causes all kinds of problems, including excessive algae, which sucks up all the oxygen and makes the water basically uninhabitable."

Once native to the area, oysters haven't been seen there for 50 years, said Andrew Jay, president of the Massachusetts Oyster Project.

"While we've made tremendous strides in water quality in

Boston Harbor, there still is significant room for improvement. If we can establish an oyster population, we can make a big difference in terms of water quality," he said.

Since the oysters will be downstream from a combined sewer overflow, they cannot be harvested and will grow to adulthood, Jay said.

He said he hopes to expand the project into the Neponset and Mystic rivers.